

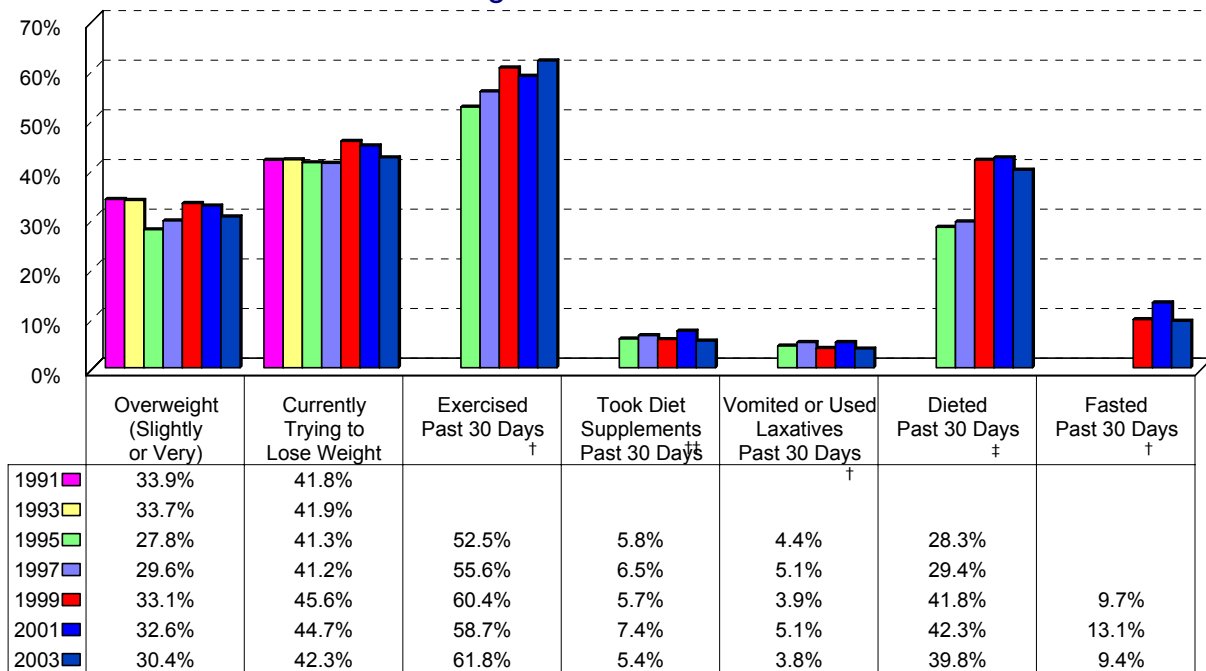
## Body Weight and Weight Loss

This section summarizes what the YRBSS asks students about their height and weight, how they feel about their weight and what, if anything, they are doing to control their weight as it relates to exercise, diet, fasting, diet supplementation, and vomiting and laxative use.

### Highlights

Figure 1 shows that there was little change in the percent of teens reporting they were overweight (“slightly” or “very”) from 1991 to 2003. The percentage of teens reporting that they are currently trying to lose weight also changed very little. The percentage of teens reporting that they exercised or dieted during the past 30 days to maintain or lose weight has shown an inconsistent trend since 1995. The percentage of teens reporting that they used dietary supplements, vomited or used laxatives to maintain or lose weight in the past 30 days was 39.8 percent in 2003.

**Figure 1: Body Weight & Weight Loss Behaviors\***  
High School Students



<sup>†</sup> "to lose weight or keep from gaining weight"

<sup>†‡</sup> "took diet pills, powders, or liquids without a doctor's advice to lose weight (does not include meal replacement products)"

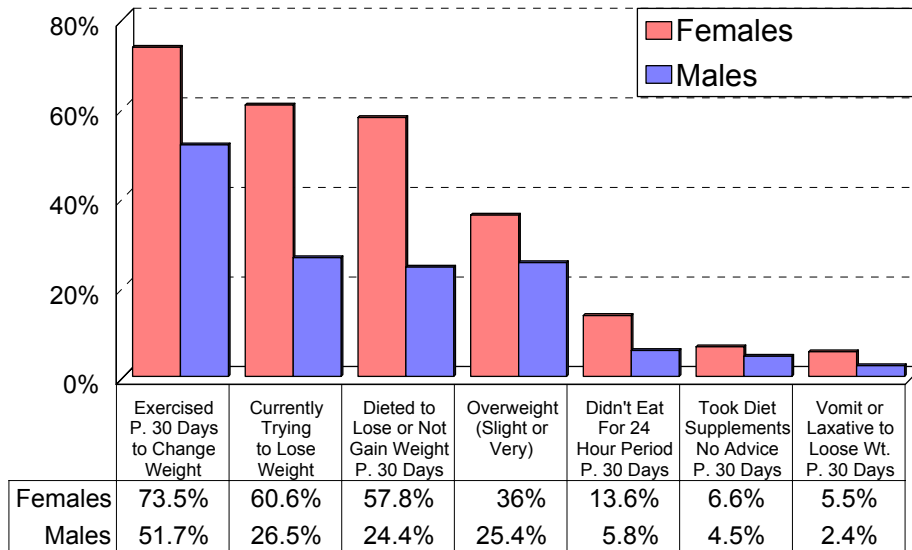
<sup>‡</sup> 1999: "ate less food, fewer calories, or foods low in fat to lose weight or keep from gaining weight" 1997, 1995: "dieted"

\* Grade Adjusted

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Across all the survey years, female teens were considerably more likely than male teens to report that they are overweight or that they engage in weight loss behaviors ( Figures 2, 3 and 4).

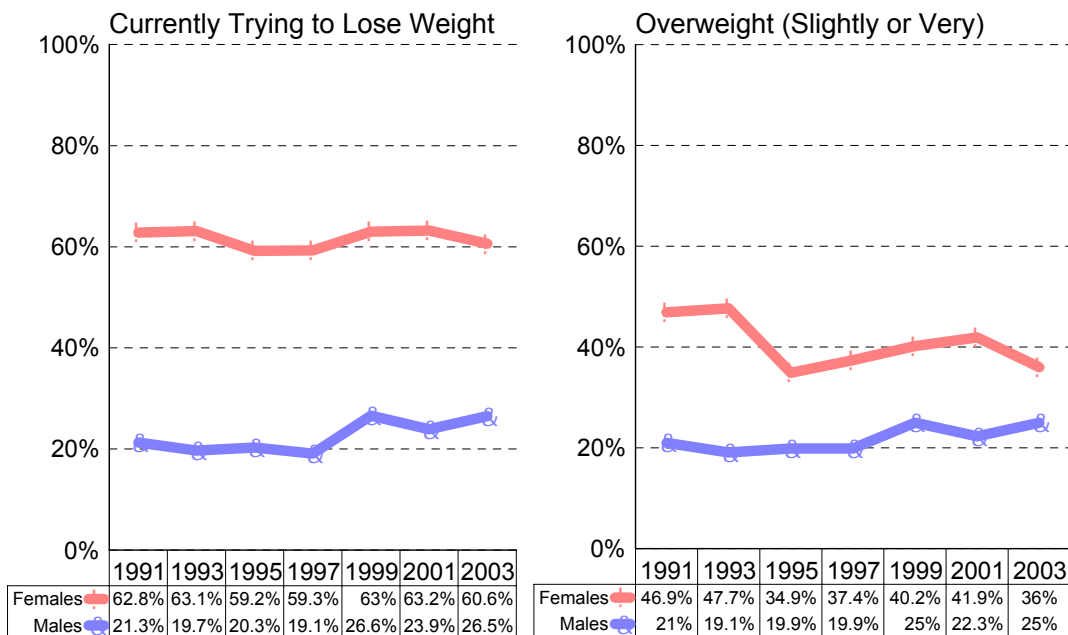
**Figure 2: 2003 Body Weight and Weight Loss\***  
High School Students



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\*Grade Adjusted

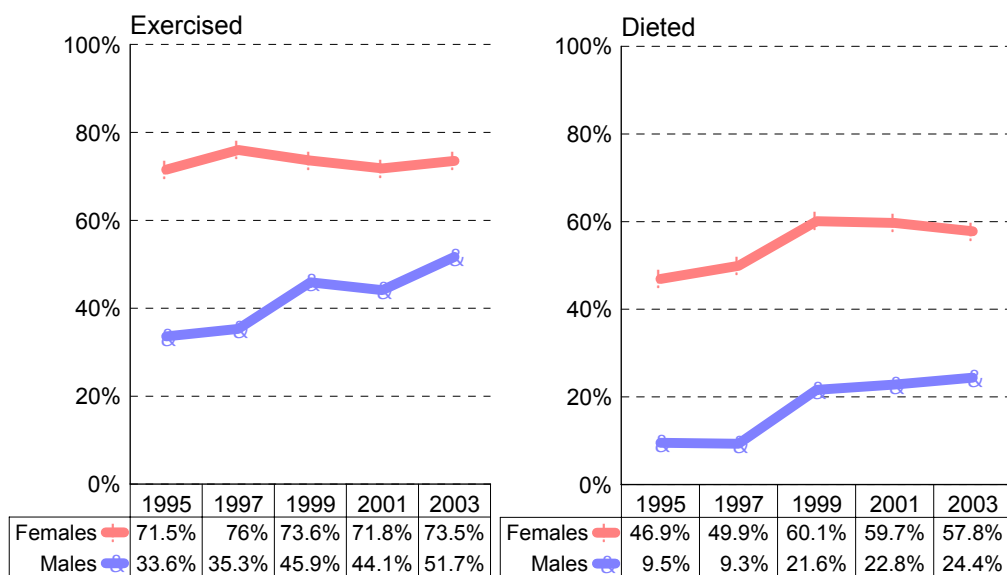
**Figure 3: Overweight and Weight Loss\***  
High School Students



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\*Grade Adjusted

**Figure 4: Exercise and Diet\***  
**High School Students Who Reported Exercising or Dieting to Lose or Maintain Body Weight During the Past 30 Days**

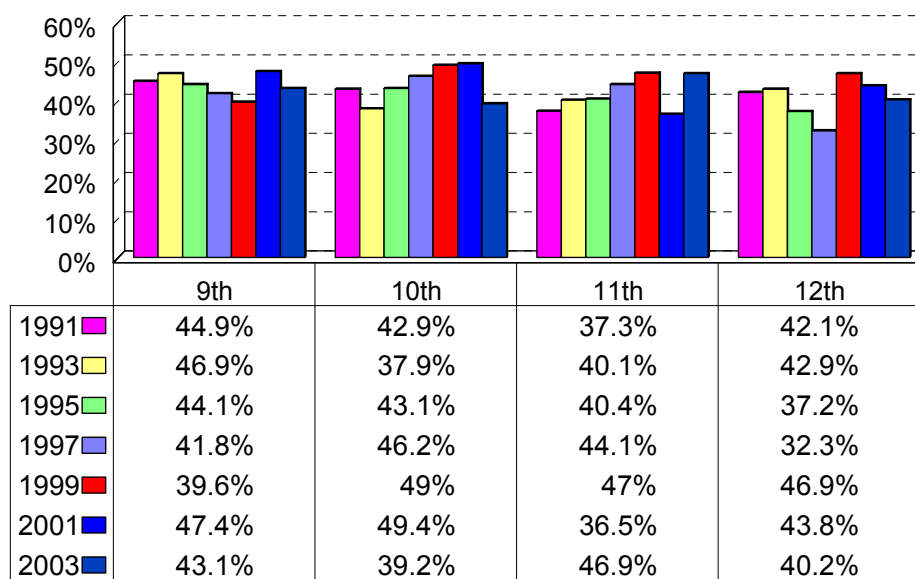


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\*Grade Adjusted

Figures 5, 6 and 7 show reports of weight loss intent, exercise and dieting among teens in all grades surveyed.

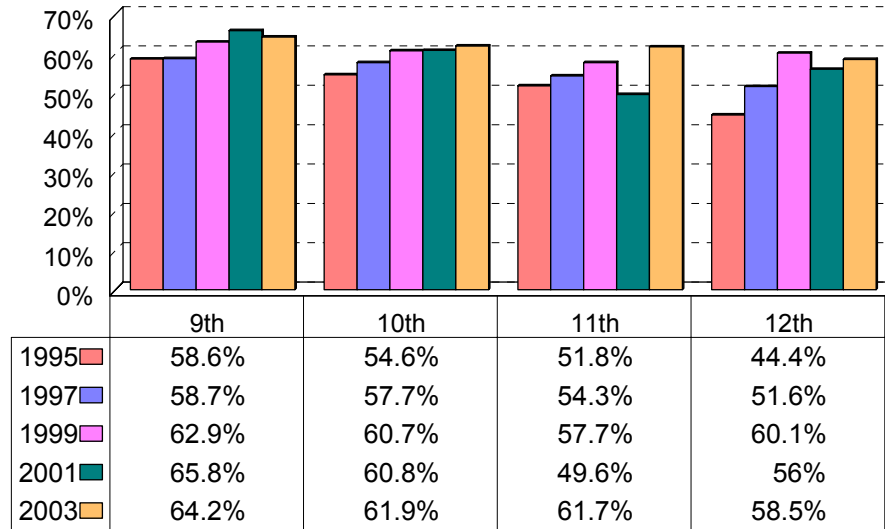
**Figure 5: Weight Loss By Grade**  
**High School Students Who Reported Currently Trying to Lose Weight**



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## Figure 6: Exercise By Grade

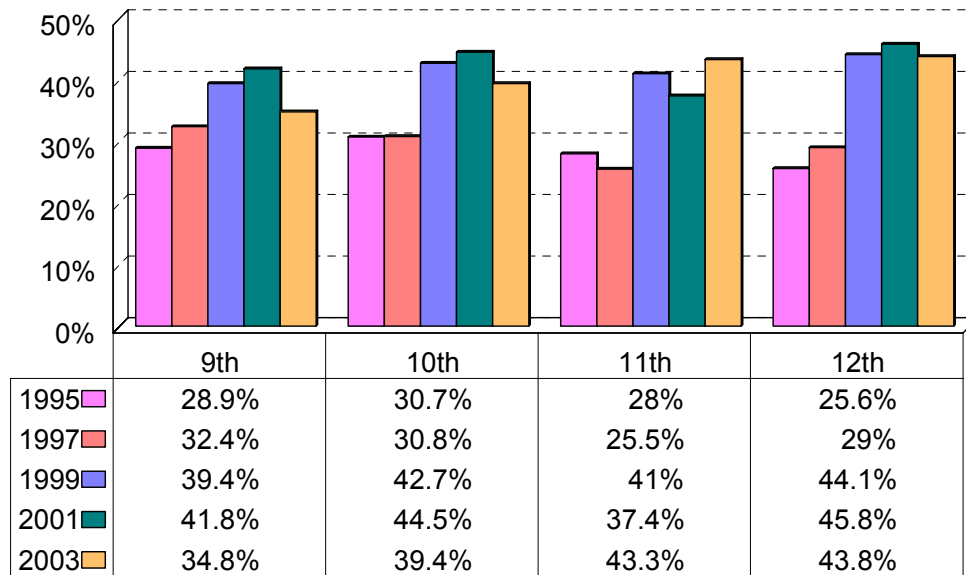
High School Students Who Reported Exercising to Lose or Maintain Body Weight During the Past 30 Days



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## Figure 7: Dieted By Grade

High School Students Who Reported Dieting to Lose or Maintain Body Weight During the Past 30 Days



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## **Public Health Comment: Body Weight and Weight Loss**

-Mike Heyl

The trend for students identifying themselves as slightly or very overweight has remained consistent at around 33% for over a decade. However, the percentage of high school students identifying themselves as having exercised in the past 30 days to lose weight exceeds 40%. This suggests that there is another reason other than health for trying to change their body weight. In nearly every response of the survey regarding body weight and behaviors, girls are more likely than boys to have an unhealthy view of their body weight and exhibit behaviors directed at changing their body weight. While a significant number of high school students need to be concerned with their body weight and develop positive behaviors to reduce their body weight, too many are focusing on their body weight for cosmetic or body image reasons and not for health reasons.

Looking over the past 10 years at the rate of high school students that identified themselves as currently trying to lose weight, girls have been three times more likely than boys to identify themselves in that manner. However, in that same time period, girls have been only twice as likely to identify themselves as being slightly or very overweight. In turn, girls are also twice as likely that boys to claim they have exercised in the past 30 days to lose weight and three times more likely to have dieted in the past 30 days to lose weight.

Healthy eating behaviors, similar to physical activity behaviors, start at a young age. The youth of Lancaster County model behavior that they see in their homes and make nutritional choices based on what is offered for meals and snacks at their schools. For these reasons, it is most important to create more environments that provide healthy eating choices to positively affect the lifelong health outcomes of youth in our community.